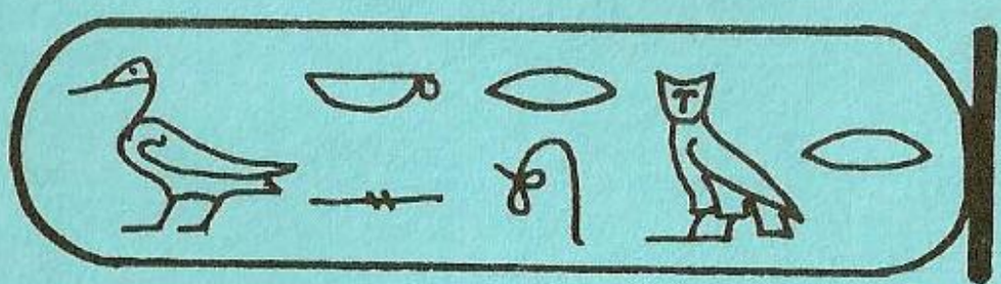
the ROHMER REVIEW



No. 14

NOTES FROM THE EDITOR:

Readers with long memories will recall that this issue was promised to appear shortly after #13. That promise was not intended to be just one more part of the humor in #13: the camera copy for (the original version of) this issue was in fact delivered to the printer at the same time the completed #13 was picked up. A few days later I received a telephone call from the printer, informing me in somewhat embarrassed terms that during a move to new quarters a few of the pages had been dropped, and had somehow acquired large black footprints on them. They would have to be done over. But this mishap came just at the beginning of a most extraordinarily busy six months, and until recently the time was simply not available. When I did return to the preparation of this issue, it was not only the damaged pages which had to be re-done; the editorial comments and book news were out of date, and had to be discarded. But here at last is TRR #14. Enjoy.

Leading off this issue is a brief memoir of Sax Rohmer by novelist, short story writer and essayist, Jean Stafford. At the time of Miss Stafford's acquaintance with Rohmer, she had already published her first two novels, *Boston Adventure* (1944) and *The Mountain Lion* (1947). Later works include *The Catherine Wheel* (1952) and *Children Are Bored on Sunday* (1953). In 1970 Miss Stafford won the Pulitzer Prize for her *Collected Stories*. Her essay, "Plight of the American Language" (*Saturday Review/World*, 4 December 1973), is a delightful yet sobering commentary; it deserves to be reprinted. "The Polyglot Mr. Rohmer" is part of a lecture delivered on several college campuses in the late 1960s. I am grateful to James Sandoe for letting me know of the existence of this lecture, and to Miss Stafford for permitting its publication here.

Gratitude is also due to John Nieminski for his research on Sax Rohmer's visit to Chicago in 1932, and for his transcriptions from microfilm of the newspaper coverage of that event; to Franklyn E. Hamilton for his portrait of Fu Manchu, drawn especially for TRR; and to all the other contributors, present and past, whose interest in Sax Rohmer and willingness to share information and opinions are what keeps this journal in business.

Two articles in this issue are by-products of more extensive research. T. J. McCauley has used his remarkable collection of old sheet music as a basis for articles in *Ford Times*, *Bowler's Journal*,

[continued on page 9]

THE POLYGLOT MR. ROHMER

by JEAN STAFFORD

Whenever I am asked to talk to students about the problems of writing, the only one I can think of offhand is the nearly insuperable problem of writing at all. After thirty-two years of earning my living in this way, I don't find it a bit easier than when I started out and I don't know any writer I respect who does.

I have known a few carefree writers in my lifetime and the one who comes immediately to mind is Sax Rohmer, whom possibly not a soul in this room has ever read or, indeed, even heard of. He was the sire of Dr. Fu Manchu, brilliant master-mind of the Yellow Peril that terrorized the London docks throughout my childhood. He and his minions trafficked in dope and jewels and white slavery, and murder---without a mark on the body---was their business. Rohmer must have had almost a hundred books to his name when he died. I knew him slightly in New York a few years before his death and I'm sorry I didn't cultivate the seeds of our acquaintanceship.

Shortly after the war, when apartments were hard come by, I found a dark, uncomfortable place in the West Seventies over a music school for children. I didn't know about the children until after I had signed a three year lease and had moved in; within minutes of the departure of the moving van, the fiddles started being used like buzz-saws and the pianos started getting walloped, the horns began to neigh and nicker, and some persevering criminal of ten began, without success, to learn the piccolo obbligato from *Stars and Stripes Forever*.

The only thing that gave me any pleasure during this Walpurgis-Nacht---or Tag---was the friendly exchange I had each morning with my neighbor, Sax Rohmer. We put our trash out into the hallway at about the same time, and we would stand there chatting for a few minutes in our wrappers among our garbage pails. He was a mild, clean little old man and impossible to imagine as the inventor of the cruelest, most ingenious atrocities ever perpetrated in Limehouse or anywhere else. (Even after one has got sophisticated, one tends to identify the creator with his creature.) Since Mr. Rohmer lived in the front of the building and could see down into the street, he used to give me a weather report as he deduced it from the way pedestrians were dressed. My windows all faced blank walls

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and the only thing *I* could look down into was a fenced pen where lived two great shambling grey dogs that looked like yaks and howled like Bugle Ann as soon as Piccolo Pete began. I can't remember how my neighbor came to know that I was in the service like himself, but he did, and one morning, over the coffee grounds and beat-up milk cartons, he asked me to come and drink champagne and talk shop. He suggested some extremely peculiar time of day---something like half past two in the afternoon---and I went, aquiver with curiosity.

To begin with, I couldn't imagine why, after those countless books and countless movies made of them, he was living in such an ordinary building in such a scrimy neighborhood. I think I may have imagined that the modesty of his two and a half rooms would be belied by priceless *chinoiserie* and perhaps a collection of esoteric blow-guns. But there wasn't a hint of the Orient in his digs, not a whiff of opium or any oddments which, if they could talk, would tell dire Eastern tales. The place was furnished like a semi-detached villa in Clapham. There were strawberries and cherries in decalomania and appliqué on café curtains and on cupboards. There were French dolls with Clara Bow faces on the sofa and cut-glass bowls of butterscotch wafers on small fumed oak tables. Mrs. Rohmer was a flamboyantly yellow-haired Cockney, seeming much younger than Sax, full of smiles and hospitality like a jolly pub-owner's wife. Besides us, there was another couple, just in from Liverpool, as merry as crickets and as respectable as church. The gent manufactured socks and the missus took prizes at flower shows in Leeds. When I came in, the four of them were cutting up touches about dog races they'd been to together, and they pitied me kindly because I'd never bet on the greyhounds at Wembley. I learned straight off that I was keeping company with Tories as doctrinaire as Iowa Republicans, and the Rohmers were living in New York because they could not abide the Labor government with Attlee at its head. Their money---and I gathered there was a tidy sum of it---was still in £.s.d's with the Old Lady of Threadneedle Street and that was why they shared my humble address. It seemed a heroic stand.

But their friends were more venal, and much as they inveighed against the present regime, they stayed on in Leeds because they were attached to their comfort. Mr. MacMillan, as I shall call him, told about a new line of socks he was putting out. They were similar to Argylls but they were to be made of nylon and something called antron and were to be known as Midlothians. Mrs. Mac bragged on her last year's delphiniums.

Then it was time for Sax Rohmer and me to talk *our* shop. He asked me if I wrote in longhand or used a typewriter, and he asked me whether I wrote in the morning or at night. He himself used a Waterman fountain pen and seldom revised and he worked from half past nine until tea-time as a usual thing. Then I asked him---although as the words issued from my mouth I knew my question was beside the point---what he thought of his fellows in the chiller

game. What did he think of Simenon, for example? Or Agatha Christie? He'd never heard of any of them, and he said he'd read nobody but himself for the past twenty years. However, he read himself in translation: it wasn't a half bad way to get up a language. His German was excellent, his Italian was quite good, his Norwegian was passable, and just now he was learning modern Greek because six of his Fu's had recently come out in Athens. Mr. MacMillan said that if only travel were not so restricted these days, he would like to go to Greece and get some new ideas for socks---he said he understood that the weaving in the hinterlands was well worth a look-see. His wife had always wanted to visit the islands when the cyclamens were in bloom.

The world became as small as this room and as snug as a sock, and most of it thanks to the absolutely hideous tortures and fiendishly clever international skullduggery that had come out of the bald head of this sweet, contented little right-winger, Sax Rohmer.

I left, light-headed with bubbly and light-hearted with my colleague's sensible view of his produce. There wasn't a romantic bone in his skeleton or a drop of bad blood in his veins or, insofar as I could see, a neurosis in his noggin. He wrote with a Waterman instead of a Sheaffer or a Parker just as a dowser might prefer a branch of willow to one of hazel as his divining rod.

¤ ¤ ¤ ¤ ¤ ¤ ¤ ¤ ¤ ¤ ¤ ¤ ¤ ¤

Addendum (letters, 25 Aug 75 and 18 Sep 75):

There was something about my acquaintance with Sax Rohmer in *Publisher's Weekly*, but it was nothing I wrote: I was quoted. Possibly it was at a forum during the week of the National Book Award happenings and, if so, it would have been in 1960 or 1961---whenever it was that the fiction award went to Walker Percy for *The Movie Goer* and I was one of the judges.

I'm sorry I can't tell you any more, but there's nothing more to tell. What delighted me (and I think this was probably what was quoted in *PW*) was his reading himself in translation. I am delighted to learn that what he told me was true, that he *did* read himself in translation. Somehow, having told the anecdote so many times, to the delectation of so many writer friends, I have occasionally been visited with the fear that I might have made the whole thing up.

We *did* talk a little more about writing and he gave me some tips on where good money was to be had. (At that time I was just emerging from the quarterlies and was pretty well launched at *The New Yorker*, of which he was only dimly aware.) I *think* everything else is accurate---certainly the appointments of the apartment are---but fiction writers are untrustworthy and I may have taken some liberties with the socks-&-stephanotis pair. ¤

Sim Sones

Sax Rohmer in Chicago

by John Nieminski

As Ray Stanich's article "Radio Fu Manchu" (TRR #12) indicates, the premiere of the 1932 CBS Fu Manchu radio serial attracted some interesting newspaper publicity on the East coast as a result of Sax Rohmer's accompanying visit. Chicago journals also gave good coverage to the event. A check of press files at the Public Library uncovered an advertisement, several photographs, seven preview blurbs, a post-premiere reaction, and two rather interesting interviews with the author, spread over five newspapers.

The material examined reveals that the Rohmers arrived in Chicago on the morning of Saturday, September 24, probably by train. (No mention is made of air travel, still a novel means of transportation in those days, and one feels sure that Mrs. Rohmer, who "remembers nothing" about the trip---according to *Master of Villainy* page 209---would recall such an event.) He met with the press and posed for photographs during the day, and in the evening he and his wife were the guests of honor at a dinner at the Palmer House sponsored by local literary celebrities. On Sunday morning Rohmer was interviewed on WGN radio by CBS writer Steve Trumbull, reportedly discussing "contemporary crime."

The serial was broadcast on Monday evening at 7:45. It originated in the WBBM studios but was carried by station WGN, which was then the Chicago CBS outlet. The cast played the first episode in costume, "complimenting the first author to cross the ocean for a radio premiere," and Rohmer's voice was heard in a "short talk." The writer and his wife departed for New York the next day.

The *Chicago Tribune* provided the meatiest publicity about the program itself in its Sunday edition:

> Fred Ibbett, formerly associated with the British Broadcasting Corporation, has been engaged to direct the microphone dramas and to maintain the spirit of the author's settings---Scotland Yard and London's Limehouse district.
>
> Charles Warburton, noted British actor, has been engaged to play the part of Nailand Smith.
>
> Warburton, who established himself as an actor in Sir Frank Benson's celebrated English company, received his initial dramatic education in one of England's most famous

> schools, and first appeared before the footlights on the stage at Stratford-on-Avon, Shakespeare's birthplace. After twelve years as an apprentice actor in Sir Frank Benson's company, Warburton became association [*sic*] with Walter Hampden, American Shakespearean actor.
>
> The dramatic series will follow faithfully the original Rohmer plots and characters, including "Fu Manchu," whom Rohmer pictured as "the yellow peril incarnate in one man." Likewise, Nailand Smith, special investigator for the crown, his friend and assistant, Dr. Petrie, and Karameneh, the beautiful slave girl will be presented in the true Rohmer vein. Each episode will be a complete drama.
>
> Mysterious murders---with the victim in each case an author at work on a book concerning oriental plotting---form the background of the series.

Warburton is prominently mentioned in several papers, and a photograph of Sunda Love as "Karameneh" appears in the *Evening Post* for September 27, but interestingly enough no mention at all is made of John C. Daly, who played the leading role of Fu Manchu.

In an interview headlined "Sax Rohmer Is Surprise to Book Critic," written by Fanny Butcher and printed in the *Tribune* edition of the 26th, Rohmer mentions briefly his self-incorporation as an author for business reasons and discusses his writing habits---eleven o'clock in the evening to three in the morning, using a pencil (and sometimes a dictagraph) because of a dislike for the typewriter. He relates the following anecdote about his first published story ["The Mysterious Mummy," in the "Xmas 'Xtra" number of *Pearson's Weekly*, 24 Nov 1903---*Ed.*]:

> It was about a robbery in the British Museum. I had my thief disguise himself as a mummy, that is, wrap himself in mummy clothes under a shabby old black Prince Albert. He went into the Museum with the visitors, then, knowing that everything was kept in sarcophagi in the basement of the Museum until it was passed on by the board of the Museum, he sneaked into one of the sarcophagi and doubled as a mummy. When the guards made their rounds he was perfectly safe. In the hour between those rounds he sneaked upstairs, took from his coat pocket a vase which he had copied meticulously from the original, stole the original, substituting the fake, went back to his hiding place and with the first visitors in the morning walked out, a shabby little man who attracted no notice from any one.
>
> That story appeared in Pearson's Magazine and caused no great stir. But six months later a Frenchman did exactly the same thing in the Louvre, stole a very valuable gold vase

> and by the mischance of leaving a bit too early in the morning, was caught. His effects were searched and a copy of Pearson's Magazine was found among them. He confessed that when he had read the story it sounded so sensible and so logical a way to rob a museum that he had tried it himself.

Mrs. Rohmer was the focus of attention in an article by Ione Quinby in the *Chicago Evening Post* for September 24 titled "Sax Rohmer, Thrills Author, Has to Be 'Locked In' to Write." Described as "about as attractive an author's wife as ever set foot in Chicago," she impressed Ms. Quinby as an ideal writer's mate, "the recipe of which is: An exquisite sense of humor, 100 per cent understanding and a real appreciation of what must be done if her husband is to finish a prospective bit of work." Rohmer is quoted as hating to write, which he can do only in sustained periods of intensive effort. "When I get the mood for writing ... and get acquainted with my characters, I don't dare leave them. If I did, I couldn't get back on the same plane with them. So I lock myself in---"

The *Post* for Tuesday the 27th provides the only program review in evidence locally. In a commentary headed "Phew, Manchu and Others, Too," Radio Editor Harry Steele complains of the "advance of a veritable plague of mystery sketches, each a bit more eerie in composition than its predecessor... It is a token of poor radio showmanship these days when a trip around the dials doesn't reveal at least ten corpses a night, most of them reduced to mere clay by such expedients as the inquisitioners and the Chinese torture experts would have considered unethical," and he predicts that: "Surely, and not so slowly, this type of program will produce a race of insomniacs, and heedless parents, whose children are permitted to listen to the shrieks of the doomed and the moans of the dying, will find themselves raising a breed of neurotics who will be a boon to the psychiatrists of the coming generation." (I wonder how old Dr. Fredric Wertham was when this was written?)

¤ ¤ ¤ ¤ ¤ ¤ ¤

Addendum: Text of article from the *Chicago Evening Post*, Saturday 24 September 1932, page 2:

Sax Rohmer, Thrills Author,
Has to Be 'Locked In' to Write

by Ione Quinby

When you give credit to a successful author, don't discredit the wife!

Sax Rohmer of London, recognized master writer of mystery stories and authority on crimes and criminals of all races, arrived in

Sax Rohmer in Chicago

Chicago today to be present at the premiere radio performance of his dramatized "Dr. Fu Manchu," to be released Monday over Station WGN and the Columbia Broadcasting System. But so did his wife, the charming, red-headed Elizabeth Knox, who is known for her humorous stories about children!

Mrs. Sax Rohmer is an author's ideal wife, the recipe of which is: An exquisite sense of humor, 100 per cent understanding and a real appreciation of what must be done if her husband is to finish a prospective bit of work.

Mr. and Mrs. Rohmer arrived at the Palmer House early today from New York, where they arrived yesterday from England, their home country.

He Hates Writing!

"Writing, I suppose, is an all-absorbent occupation which you love, is it not?" an admiring newspaper writer asked.

"I hate it," announced Mr. Rohmer, an attractive individual, dressed in English tweeds. "I'd rather do almost anything else."

"What, for instance?"

"He likes to do nothing!" suggested his wife. "He likes to drink and sit around and talk and---."

Which, to state it plainly, puts the kibosh on authors feeling industrious and waiting to write literary classics!

"I can tell you all about him," suggested Mrs. Rohmer, who is about as attractive an author's wife as ever set foot in Chicago. "He hates to work, but when he gets an idea and decides to put it on paper, he goes to his study in our flat in London and I lock him in! He goes into hiding like a mole for six weeks at a time. I don't let gods, nor in-laws, nor dear friends disturb him during that time, and he has a private lock on the inside to keep me out."

Locks Himself In.

"Different writers have different ways of working. I can't set a schedule and work regularly every day, as, say, Sinclair Lewis is supposed to do," Mr. Rohmer said. "When I get in the mood for writing,ahowever, and get acquainted with my characters, I don't dare leave them. If I did, I couldn't get back on the same plane with them. So I lock myself in---"

"And when he comes out he's a nervous wreck," declared Mrs. Rohmer. "But I understand him and like him just the same. And I don't get jealous of his absorption with some entrancing heroine during that time. If I intruded he could never do justice to the heroine, and I know it."

Mrs. Rohmer is not any novice at writing herself. She is well known in England as the author of short humorous stories about children, which her husband admits are good.

John Nieminski

Author of 23 Books.

Sax Rohmer, who has a flat in London and a cottage in the Surrey hills, has written about twenty-three books, the most of which are mystery stories. He is also known as a prolific writer of short stories. Besides "Dr. Fu Manchu," his best-known work, which has been translated into all languages and has been dramatized for the stage and screen in many countries, he is well known for a score of other works.

His next book, "Tales of East and West," will be published soon, and he is contemplating a complete history of Haroun al Raschid, the great caliph of Bagdad.

"Which all means that I must take my key and lock him in again," Mrs. Rohmer explains confidentially.

Following the premiere radio performance Monday, at which Mr. Rohmer will make a short talk, the couple will return to New York and thence to England.

An interesting party is being given for the author and his wife at the Palmer House tonight. Local literary celebrities will be among the guests.

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NOTES FROM THE EDITOR [continued from Inside Front Cover]

Relics, *The American Book Collector*, and other publications. "Who Killed Kelly?" records an interesting discovery related to Sax Rohmer's song-writing activities. "A Note on Dovelands Cottage" comes from J. L. Biggers's extensive research on place names, both real and fictional, in the works of Sax Rohmer. The full results of this research are to be made available to TRR readers: *English Locations in the Novels and Collected Short Stories of Sax Rohmer* by Julian L. Biggers will be published in October 1976 in a limited, numbered edition. Over 800 place-names are cited, with sources. Several maps and drawings are also included. Having seen samples of this work, I can recommend it highly to all dedicated Rohmerians. The edition will be limited to the total number of advance orders received by 8 October 1976. Numbers will be assigned in order of postmark date. Copies will be mailed in late October. Anyone wishing a copy of this publication should send a check or money order for $2.50 plus postage (25¢ for book rate, 50¢ for first class) to: J. L. Biggers/6103 Lynnhaven Drive/Lubbock, Texas 79413.

While reading over the text of this issue I noticed what seem to be a larger than usual number of references to the Sax Rohmer biography, *Master of Villainy*. New readers of TRR (and there are quite a few, thanks to a plug by Otto Penzler in *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*) may want to know that this book, by Elizabeth Sax Rohmer and Cay Van Ash, is still in print. Both the cloth-bound and the paper-bound

[continued on page 26]

The publisher of the British hardcover editions of the "intermediate" Fu Manchu novels---*Daughter* through *Island*---has always been Cassell & Co. The latest Cassell reprints, called to my attention recently by TRR subscriber Brian Hughes, are new printings of *Daughter of Fu Manchu*, *The Mask of Fu Manchu*, *The Bride of Fu Manchu*, and *President Fu Manchu*, released in 1973. Although the texts are offset from previous Cassell printings, the bindings and dust-jackets are in a new uniform style; the attractive jacket designs by Tony Phebey are color-coordinated with the bindings for a nice effect. Priced originally at £1.75 each (£1.85 for *President*), the books have recently appeared at lower prices in "remainder" outlets in London.

Also on the British scene: several titles once reprinted or announced by Tom Stacey Ltd. (which ceased operations in 1973) have recently been taken over by a new publishing concern, Severn House. Among Severn's first releases (May 1976) is a reprint of Rohmer's *The Si-Fan Mysteries* (= *The Hand of Fu-Manchu*). Severn has also published the first British edition of John Dickson Carr's *Castle Skull*, originally announced by Stacey but not officially published by that firm. [Thanks to Allen J. Hubin for this information, gleaned from *The Bookseller*, 1 May 76.]

Nine Sax Rohmer titles have been announced for reprinting in hardcover editions by The American Reprint Co. [Box 476, Jackson Heights, New York 11372]: *The Hand of Fu-Manchu*, *The Mask of Fu Manchu*, *The Bride of Fu Manchu*, *The Golden Scorpion*, *The Day the World Ended*, *The Emperor of America*, *Hangover House*, *Tales of Secret Egypt*, and *The Romance of Sorcery*. The American Reprint Co. is affiliated with Aeonian Press, a publisher of library reprint editions, and originally offered its books only to libraries and educational institutions. However, according to an account in *Publishers Weekly*, the books are now made available through bookstores. Whether orders from individuals are accepted is not known. At any rate, the latest Aeonian/American Reprint Co. catalogue indicates that the Rohmer titles are not yet in print. When they are published, they will sell for $7.95 each ($6.95 for *Hangover House*, $5.95 for *The Bride of Fu Manchu*; the latter title is offset from a paperback edition, and is the first U.S. hardcover edition to use the British form of the title, previous U.S. hardcover editions having been issued as *Fu Manchu's Bride*). *The Romance of Sorcery* will apparently be the complete edition, the same text as that used in the 1973 Causeway Press reprint. There is no indication of whether the original illustrations will be included in the new edition. ▪▪ The American Reprint Co. list

[continued on page 18]

WHO KILLED KELLY?

by T. J. McCauley

Few people interested in the popular music of the first decade of the twentieth century would fail to recognize the refrain, "Has Anyone Here Seen Kelly?" This song, written and composed by C. W. Murphy and Will Letters, is still heard occasionally today, especially around St. Patrick's Day. For those whose memories need prodding, one chorus should suffice:

Has anybody here seen Kelly?
K. E. Double-L. Y.
Has anybody here seen Kelly?
Have you seen him smile?
Sure his hair is red, his eyes are blue,
And he's Irish through and through.
Has anybody here seen Kelly?
Kelly from the Emerald Isle.

The song was introduced by Nora Bayes (of the famous team, Bayes and Norworth) in Lew Fields's production of *The Jolly Bachelors* (1909) and met with immediate popular success, a success that lived far beyond the alleged demise of Michael Kelly, who "with his sweetheart came from County Cork."

Who killed Kelly?

Sax Rohmer did. Not through the agency of Dr. Fu Manchu, the Oriental wizard who thrilled and frightened the reading (and moviegoing) public for decades---no, Sax Rohmer killed Kelly with a song. "Kelly's Gone to Kingdom Come," words by Sax Rohmer, music by T. W. Thurban, was introduced by the "Queen of Song," Maud Lambert, in Lew Fields's *The Midnight Sons* in 1910, and was published in sheet music form that same year.

The story is told in the chorus:

Kelly's gone to Kingdom Come,
Kingdom Come,
Kingdom Come!
Bought an aeroplane by gum!
O - O - my!
Tried to do what others did,
Kelly did,
Kelly did!
Now he's below where the dead ones go,
And he never said good-bye!

On the sheet music the song is billed as "A Bigger Hit Than 'Has Anyone Here Seen Kelly?'" Alas, this blurb proved false, as blurbs so often do. The sequel did not meet with the popular success of the original.

I heard "Kelly's Gone to Kingdom Come" just the other day for the first time. A friend played it for me on the piano. She had never heard of the song, but sight-read it from my copy of the sheet music. This could have been the first time in decades that anyone has heard the song... .

Did Kelly go to Kingdom Come? I suspect he did not. Sax Rohmer, after all, had the Irish penchant for fantasy, romance and exaggeration. My theory is that Kelly retired to the hills of Donegal, where he lives even to this very day as a bee-keeper. (Saint Patrick chased the snakes out of Ireland and they came to America and entered politics, may God have mercy on them, but he left the bees alone.) Michael Kelly has, however, so well succeeded in concealing his identity that it would take a certain other celebrated bee-keeper to unearth his whereabouts. ¤

Editor's Note: "Kelly's Gone to Kingdom Come" was copyright 1910 by Charles Sheard & Co., a British firm, and was probably first published in Britain. According to Mr. McCauley, the sheet music lists Will Rossiter, Chicago, as "sole and exclusive owner of all American rights." The song was also published by a Sheard affiliate in Sydney, Australia.

The importance of the song, beyond whatever dim musical merit it might have, is that it represents the earliest known use of the Sax Rohmer byline in the United States, and one of the earliest uses anywhere. Its only rival in these sweepstakes is another song, "The Camels' Parade: A Desert Arabesque," published in London in 1910 by Ascherberg, Hopwood & Crew, Ltd. This song was also a collaboration with T. W. Thurban, with whom Rohmer wrote several other songs as well. (It was most likely this same Tommy Thurban whom Sax Rohmer once bashed over the head with a chair---see *Master of Villainy*, page 69.) ¤¤

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THE SEARCH FOR SAX ROHMER

by Cay Van Ash

How Sax Rohmer came by his peculiarly effective pen-name is one of the minor mysteries surrounding that colorful and mysterious personality. The precise facts may perhaps never be known; but the absence of any more reliable information encourages speculation.

It was as 'Arthur Sarsfield Ward' that he first broke into print in the year 1903. Even before that he had begun the search for a suitable pseudonym, and 'Sarsfield' had already superseded 'Henry,' as a result of his mother's fanciful claim to descent from the 17th Century Irish hero, Patrick Sarsfield. The first known appearances of the byline 'Sax Rohmer' were (as noted in TRR #9 and elsewhere in the present issue) in the oddly incongruous context of songs, "The Camels' Parade" and "Kelly's Gone to Kingdom Come," both published in 1910.

However, it was as 'Sax Rohmer' that he introduced himself to his future wife in 1905, and we have her assurance that he used both names alternately until the publication of "Fu-Manchu" gave overwhelming prestige to the pseudonym. Why, one wonders, did he hesitate so long over the choice? My own view is that, on the one hand, he was loath to sacrifice the degree of recognition which 'Arthur Sarsfield Ward' had thus far gained, and, on the other hand, he had devised 'Sax Rohmer' as appropriate to the mystic type of material which he still hoped to write---later typified by *The Romance of Sorcery* and *The Orchard of Tears*. Prior to 1905 he could not have associated 'Sax Rohmer' with the unique genre of "exotic mystery" stories which it was destined to represent, since he had no idea then that he would write such stories.

On one score, at least, there is no mystery. I am satisfied that the name itself had no significance, despite the interview (see TRR #10) which he himself gave to *The New Yorker* in 1947. When I saw him the following year, he dismissed the incident as "all nonsense"---having long since explained to me that 'Sax Rohmer' had never been intended as anything but an eye-catching and sonorous combination of syllables. But this still leaves an interesting question unanswered. Had he, as I then supposed him to mean, put the name together simply by trial and error, or had he come upon it ready-made? And if the latter, where?

Former home of the Römer family, Frankfurt-am-Main

[photo by Cay Van Ash]

The Search for Sax Rohmer

In a letter published in TRR #11, Mr. Douglas Rossman mentions the odd coincidence of coming across "Römer (Saxe)" in a book of heraldry. This interested me at the time, and I was further reminded of it when, rather unexpectedly, I recently found myself in Frankfurt-am-Main ... .

Readers of *Master of Villainy* may remember that Arthur Sarsfield Ward had interested the editors of *Pearson's Magazine* with "The McVillin" and had been invited to submit a series of stories written around the same character. Finding himself unequal to the task, he panicked and decamped to the Netherlands in a Dutch eel-boat, after which, as I somewhat boldly asserted, "Sax Rohmer came back."

I must confess that this plausible sequence of events has turned out to be not so firmly founded in fact as I had thought. When we were writing the book, Elizabeth and I did our best to stick to the facts, so far as they were known. But there were times when the relationship and exact sequence of events could only be deduced. It now transpires that there could have been no connection between the McVillin fiasco and the Dutch eel-boat episode, since the latter took place prior to 1905 and "The McVillin" was not published until December 1906. Moreover, it is now clear that our author did write at least one more McVillin story, titled "The Ebony Casket" (the manuscript exists), and planned a third, to be called "Hermione la Villière." Evidently they did not meet with the approval of *Pearson's*, but it is rumored that one, and possibly both, may have been published elsewhere.

Curiously enough, the trip to Holland may nevertheless have resulted in the metamorphosis from 'Arthur Sarsfield Ward' to 'Sax Rohmer.'

Prominent among the showplaces of Frankfurt is an ancient building known as the Römer---once used as a town hall and, before that, the property of the same family noted by Mr. Rossman. "Saxe" is the French form of "Saxony" and, although the name now applies to a part of East Germany, it had, in the 12th Century, referred to the northwest part of the country. As I stood looking at that venerable pile of architecture, I wondered again ... .

Nothing is known as to what 'Arthur Sarsfield Ward' did after landing at the Hook, and it has always seemed strange to me that his journey seemingly provided no settings for subsequent stories. Throughout his career, Sax Rohmer rarely visited any place without finding material for his use, yet no mention of Holland follows his visit to that country. The period romances which he was writing at that early stage were usually set against an imaginative background of medieval France, clearly inspired by Alexandre Dumas.

What, then, had he done in Holland? Where had he stayed? Or had he, in fact, stayed there at all? Suddenly I recalled the Gothic setting of another little-known work, "A Mission to Grünzburg" (details of publication so far untraced, but certainly

written about that time). I thought of the sombre *Schloss* from a window of which the wicked Count Hugo hurled himself to destruction in the river two hundred feet below---and I thought I had the answer. Landing at the Hook, the young Mr. Ward had simply taken the train to Amsterdam, from which point a few more hours by rail would have brought him to Cologne. Thence he might either have continued by the line following the west bank of the river or, more likely, boarded the steamer, passing upstream through the dramatic scenery of the Rhine Valley---past the legendary Lorelei Rock and the profusion of ancient castle buildings standing out stark and forbidding against the skyline on the precipitous crags of the lefthand shore.

Disembarking at Mainz, as most travellers do, he would have taken the train again and, in less than an hour, reached Frankfurt. Here he would scarcely have failed to undertake the usual round of historic sights---Goethe's house, the Eschenheimer tower, the Rententurm ... and so, sooner or later, stood there by the Fountain of Justice in the little cobbled square closed in on one side by the high façade of that memorable old house once owned by the Römers of Saxe.

Of course, this is all just theorizing---but theorizing of the sort in which Sax Rohmer himself took delight, so I make no apology for it. Mr. Rossman's interesting discovery may yet have been less of a coincidence than he supposed.

¤ ¤ ¤ ¤ ¤ ¤ ¤ ¤

Sir Henry Complains:

"And what's more, their idea of sending me messages, and bribing Chinamen to call, and the cards that're sent up here... . Why, only last week they phoned up from the downstairs office and said an Asiatic gent wanted to see me, and gave his name. I was so bloomin' mad I chewed the phone, and I yelled down and told Carstairs to chuck the fellow down all four flights of stairs. And he did. And then it turned out that the poor feller's name really *was* Dr. Fu-Manchu after all, and he came from the Chinese Legation."

---Sir Henry Merrivale, in *The Plague Court Murders* (1934), Ch. XIII, by Carter Dickson (John Dickson Carr)

also includes titles by Margery Allingham, Max Brand, H. Rider Haggard, Frances & Richard Lockridge, Ernest Haycox, Leslie Charteris, and many other writers of popular fiction.

The Pyramid Books paperback reprints of the Fu Manchu novels are proceeding on schedule, with *Island* due in August 1976. The colorful cover illustrations by R. Krepel and the matching cover layouts make an attractive set. The publishers have added *Emperor Fu Manchu* to their list of what they insist on calling "The Adventures of Nayland Smith," so this final Fu novel will probably be included in the series. However, the next-to-last novel in the series, *Re-Enter Fu Manchu*, is still being ignored.

Readers who missed *The Wrath of Fu Manchu and Other Stories* in its Tom Stacey Ltd. hardcover edition (London, 1973) may now fill in the gap with the first U.S. edition, a paperback from DAW Books (#UW1224, $1.50, March 1976, pp. vii-x,11-240, cover by Jack Gaughan). My introduction has been slightly rewritten in order to correct a few errors, typographical and otherwise. (But one typographical error remains: it is evidently impossible to convince copy-editors that the correct spelling of a certain magazine title is *Chambers's Journal*, not *Chamber's*.) Another alteration from the Stacey edition is in the Si-Fan seals used in the title story. Cay Van Ash's article "The Seals of the Si-Fan" in TRR #11 explained that the designs used in the Stacey edition were incorrect, and provided correct versions, drawn especially for TRR by Kiku Onaka. These correct seals have been used in the DAW Books paperback. Unfortunately the publisher did not see fit to credit the source of these designs.

Another version of *The Wrath of Fu Manchu*, somewhat harder to come by, is the French translation, *La Colère de Fu-Manchu*. This 127-page paperback was published in April 1976 by Éditions Jacques Glénat (Grenoble, France). This edition, translated from English by Michael Breitner and François Rivière, contains only the four Fu Manchu stories---"La colère de Fu-Manchu," "Les yeux de Fu-Manchu," "La parole de Fu-Manchu," and "Le cerveau de Fu-Manchu"---from the English-language edition. There is also a new introduction by M. Rivière, "La Nuit de Chinatown, ou le fantasme générateur." The cover design by Sergio Macedo is godawful. Incidentally, the Si-Fan seals in the title story are handled in a novel fashion: merely a blank spot on the page!

The last of the current Rohmer reprints to turn up here is a British paperback edition of *Brood of the Witch Queen* (Sphere Books Ltd., 1976, 5-188pp, price: 60p). This is Volume 41 in The Dennis Wheatley Library of the Occult, and contains a two-page introduction by Wheatley. The (uncredited) cover design is excellent.

[continued on page 22]

THE THIRD EYELID

by

Marvin L. Morrison

Dr. Petrie reports in his first account of Fu-Manchu on the sinister doctor's peculiar physical anomaly---the nictitating membrane or third eyelid:

> Of his face, as it looked out at me over the dirty table, I despair of writing convincingly. It was that of an archangel of evil, and it was wholly dominated by the most uncanny eyes that ever reflected a human soul, for they were narrow and long, very slightly oblique, and of a brilliant green. But their unique horror lay in a certain filminess (it made me think of the *membrana nictitans* in a bird) which, obscuring them as I threw wide the door, seemed to lift as I actually passed the threshold, revealing the eyes in all their brilliant irridescence.
>
> [Chapter VI, *The Insidious Dr. Fu-Manchu*]

Although present in almost all mammals, a nictitating membrane in a human eye is as unusual as would be a four-foot prehensile tail appended at the coccyx.

In the dawn of evolution man's ancestors did possess a third eyelid, which now remains as only a small pink blob and a minute fold of skin at the nasal corner of the eye. Then and now, the general purpose of the third eyelid was to moisten and protect the cornea. Even the chimpanzee, man's closest evolutionary relative, shows only slight residual evidence of it. Yet, from the reports of five different narrators, it is manifest that Fu Manchu did indeed possess the third eyelid. This information raises some interesting questions: why did Fu Manchu retain this blemish on his physiognomy when he could easily have had it surgically removed? Was it bothersome or beneficial? Did he have conscious muscular control of it? Answers to these and other questions can be refined from the ore of information on the nictitating membrane in the animal world and casting it with the information from the accounts of Petrie, Greville, Sterling, Kerrington, and Rohmer.

The nictitating membrane ranges from complete opacity in dogs to total transparency in the crocodile. The crocodile's third eyelid is so transparent that all details of the iris are clearly observable when the membrane is in place. Fu Manchu's nictitating membrane did not have this degree of transparency since both Dr. Petrie [*The Return of Dr. Fu-Manchu*, Chapter XIII] and Alan

Sterling [*The Bride of Fu Manchu*, Chapter XVIII] observed him when the membrane was closed and noted that the green hue of his eyes was dimmed and that he had the appearance of a blind man. The same experience often happens to cat owners: when the animal is suffering from a high fever, the rarely seen opaque eyelid fully covers the cornea and the visual impression is that the animal's eyes have rolled over in its head.

An opaque third eyelid can interfere with sight unless its owner can consciously control its motion. Since there are no records of Fu Manchu having difficulty in seeing, or in out-maneuvering his opponents in either light or darkness, it is apparent that Fu Manchu had conscious control of his third eyelids. This aspect of control makes them truly remarkable. In most animals the third eyelid is entirely passive and slides over the cornea only when the eyeball is retracted. Retraction occurs when the eyeball undergoes a pressure change, e.g. due to immersion in water, or experiences physical contact such as from high grass or a toddler's exploring digit. In the case of Fu Manchu such physical contact is ruled out, but another possibility remains: Fu Manchu's indulgence in opium might have changed the fluid pressure of his eyes and encouraged the muscles of the nictitating membrane to draw over the cornea. Recent research has shown that *cannabis sativa* can affect eye fluid pressure, and the possibility that opium might do the same is not unlikely.

A few animals employ their third eyelids for special purposes. For example, the aardvark uses it as a protective shield against the formic acid ejected by its favorite *entrée*---ants. Polar bears and reindeer employ theirs as filters against snow-blindness. Ducks, loons and other deep-diving birds are equipped with special nictitating membranes with small transparent windows which augment underwater vision by functioning as supplementary lenses. As a special aid, Fu Manchu's third eyelids probably functioned as glare reducers. They appeared most often when he was in an environment of high-contrast light and shadow, e.g., a large laboratory illuminated by a single hanging or table lamp---

> ...his great, high brow gleaming in the light of the shaded lamp above him, and with the abnormal eyes, filmed and green, raised to us, he seemed a figure from the realms of delirium.
>
> [Chapter XVII, *The Insidious Dr. Fu-Manchu*]

In such a situation, Fu Manchu could have employed his third eyelids to reduce the amount of light striking the retina by covering the cornea without forcing the pupils to contract. This use would enable him to maintain dilated pupils near a bright light and, by withdrawing the membranes when the lights went out, to have *instantaneous* night vision. This possibility is supported by the many instances in which Fu Manchu escaped a threatening situation by quenching the lights and executing a hasty retreat in the resulting

darkness.

Human possession of a third eyelid is a singular phenomenon, and marked Fu Manchu from his birth as an extraordinary individual. Sir Denis Nayland Smith noted [*The Insidious Dr. Fu-Manchu*, Chapter XXVII] that the birth of his arch opponent was reported to have been attended by "certain peculiar conditions". Smith mentions only one of these---the proximity of the birth place to a deserted burial ground. The appearance of a third eyelid must have been another. An infant with emerald green eyes that filmed with translucent membranes reminds us of Rosemary's baby: the mark of the spawn of Satan---Fu Manchu.

‡ ‡ ‡ ‡ ‡ ‡ ‡

NOTES: For convenience, discussion of Fu Manchu in this article has been set in the past tense. However, there is every reason to believe that the Doctor still lives. In 1957 he received an injection of his own longevity elixir [*Re-Enter Fu Manchu*, Chapter 2]. By his own statement this dose had an effective operational period of ten years. If his heart was able to withstand another treatment in 1967, then he should still be alive today, planning yet another injection in 1977. We have also the independent evidence of the "Smith letters", reproduced in TRR #12.

Fu Manchu's third eyelids are mentioned in each of the thirteen novels, with the exception of *The Drums of Fu Manchu*, and also in the short novel "The Wrath of Fu Manchu": a total of 29 separate references.

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Book News [continued from page 18]

The stories of Peter the Brazen vs. the Blue Scorpion by Loring Brent (George F. Worts)---the subject of Robert Weinberg's article "The Blue Scorpion" in TRR #10---are being reprinted in the *Famous Pulp Classics* series by FAX Collector's Editions [Box E, West Linn, Oregon, 97068; also available from F. and S. F. Book Co., P. O. Box 415, Staten Island, New York 10302; price, $5.00]. *Famous Pulp Classics #1*, published in the fall of 1975, contains "Cave of the Blue Scorpion," with the two succeeding stories promised for future volumes. The story is reprinted in facsimile, with the original illustrations. (Five other stories, including one by Talbot Mundy, are also included.)

All TRR subscribers are hereby urged to rush right out and buy a copy of the *Encyclopedia of Mystery & Detection* (McGraw-Hill, 1976, $19.95; also available through The Mystery Guild and The Literary Guild). Although I am listed as one of ten Contributing Editors in the book, my total contribution is so small that I feel no guilt in touting the merits of this remarkable volume. Edited (which means written and compiled) by Chris Steinbrunner, Otto Penzler, Marvin Lachman, and Charles Shibuk (only the first two, unfortunately, are listed on the book's cover and in its widespread advertising), this is an invaluable assemblage of information on mystery fiction of all sorts.

September 1976 will see the first titles in an ambitious reprint project known as The Mystery Library. Sponsored and published by the University of California, San Diego Extension, this is an open-ended series of reprints of "classic" mystery novels and short story collections in new, illustrated editions. Each volume will have a new introduction, annotations, and a complete bibliography of the author's works. Among the first titles to be issued will be John Dickson Carr's *The Crooked Hinge* (introduction by R. E. Briney) and Arthur W. Upfield's *The New Shoe* (introduction by John Ball); other selections include *The Tragedy of X* by Ellery Queen, *A Coffin for Dimitrios* by Eric Ambler, *The Complete Uncle Abner* by Melville Davisson Post, *The Circular Staircase* by Mary Roberts Rinehart, and *Trent's Last Case* by E. C. Bentley. The Editorial Board in charge of selecting the reprints is headed by John Ball, and includes Robert E. Briney, E. T. Guymon, Jr., Howard Haycraft, Allen J. Hubin, Francis M. Nevins, Jr., Otto Penzler, James Sandoe, Aaron Marc Stein, Ellery Queen, Hillary Waugh, and Phyllis A. Whitney. Accompanying the reprint volumes will be a collection of new essays on mystery fiction, titled *The Mystery Story*, with contributions from (how appropriate, though not planned this way) thirteen commentators on the genre. Warning, for those interested: none of the Mystery Library volumes will be available in bookstores; they will be available only by mail. To get your name on the mailing list for information, write to The Mystery Library/University of California, San Diego Extension/Q-014/La Jolla, California 92093. ¤¤

A Note on Dovelands Cottage

by J. L. Biggers

Is the Dovelands Cottage that is Flamby Duveen's home in *The Orchard of Tears* (1918) the same Dovelands Cottage that Fu Manchu used to imprison Fleurette in *The Trail of Fu Manchu* (1934)? The question is not so easily answered, although the same name is used in both books. Recall, however, that Rohmer located Low Fennel near Reigate in one instance and in the Cornish lowlands in another. Likewise, Rowan House moves from Finchley to near Sutton in another pair of stories.

In order to attempt an answer we must first try to locate the cottage(s). The Dovelands in *Orchard* is near Lower Charleswood, a non-existent village according to all references. However, on page 64 of the Methuen edition of *Orchard* the statement is made that inhabitants of the village of Lower Charleswood would cease "to cast envious glances toward that coy hamlet of the hills which enshrined the cottage of George Meredith." The obvious implication is that Lower Charleswood and Dovelands Cottage are near the village where Meredith's cottage is located; the statement further suggests that Lower Charleswood is not in "the hills." The biography of Meredith by J. B. Priestley provides a number of residences for Meredith but states that the cottage most associated with his name, the place in which he lived for forty years, is Flint Cottage at Box Hill. Box Hill is south of London on the edge of the Downs, four miles west-northwest of Reigate and four miles southwest of a village named Kingswood (a fact of importance later). This is an area of The Weald on the edge of the Downs. It would seem safe to assume that Flamby's Dovelands Cottage in *Orchard* might be located within the triangle bounded by Box Hill, Reigate and Kingswood.

Turning to the Dovelands Cottage in *Trail*, the text states that the cottage used to imprison Fleurette is located at Lower Kingswood. This would suggest that it is south of the true Kingswood within the triangle of towns mentioned above. An additional clue is given when the bus which Fleurette catches after escaping from the cottage is marked "Reigate-Sutton-London." Since the bus is the last of the day bound for London and the scene is late evening, we might be justified in assuming that the bus stop used by Fleurette is near the Reigate end of the route.

A close reading of the descriptions given both cottages in the two books suggests further similarities. Both seem to be relatively small, with compact, functional rooms. The descriptions of the

flower gardens and the hedge-bound lane fronting the cottage appear very similar.

The weight of the evidence, then---same name, same general geographic location, same general description---suggests that Rohmer used the same cottage for two very different scenes in books written sixteen years apart. But was there a real cottage in that triangle bounded by Reigate, Box Hill and Kingswood, that served as an inspiration for Dovelands Cottage?

Elizabeth Rohmer's cottage, Lovelands Way, at Lower Kingswood might be nominated if we had only *Trail* to deal with in the search. According to *Master of Villainy*, Lovelands Way was built about 1929 or 1930, well before *Trail* was written. This does not, however, account for the appearance of Dovelands Cottage in *Orchard* eleven years earlier. Mrs. Wyatt, a neighbor from Herne Hill days, owned the property upon which Lovelands Way was built, and also had adjoining land. Perhaps she had a cottage on the latter parcel which served as Rohmer's inspiration in 1918 for the original Dovelands. One can imagine Elizabeth, Sax, and Frank Wyatt journeying from Herne Hill to Lower Kingswood for a pleasant picnic in the country with Frank's mother or some other relative. On such a day, perhaps, Dovelands Cottage was born. ¤

Commentary by Cay Van Ash: I don't think there is much of a problem with the origin of Dovelands Cottage: Mr. Biggers supplies the correct explanation in his final paragraph. Sax and Elizabeth had long had the idea of owning a country premises similar to that of their neighbor and friend, Mrs. Wyatt. The fictional "Dovelands Cottage" of *The Orchard of Tears* was ultimately translated into the factual Lovelands Way, which was in turn used as a setting in *The Trail of Fu Manchu*. I might remark that although Lovelands Way was always referred to as a "cottage" it was really a good deal more sizeable, as evidenced by the photographs in *Master of Villainy*.

Incidentally, while on the subject of settings for Sax's books, it might be noted that the gardener's cottage at Little Gatton was used in Chapter 7 of *The Bat Flies Low*. Little Gatton was under construction at the time this book was written, and the existing house which it replaced is mentioned in the same chapter. ¤

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Late News: (see Notes from the Editor, page 26): J. L. Biggers has just passed on the news that the Zev Braun Fu Manchu film has been officially announced, with Peter Sellers signed to portray Fu and Michael Caine as Sir Denis Nayland Smith. Progress on this project will be watched *most* carefully!

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対向車両
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versions are available from F. and S. F. Book Co./P. O. Box 415/ Staten Island, New York 10302, priced at $10.00 and $4.00, respectively. Readers who have contacts in London or in certain Canadian cities such as Calgary may be able to obtain copies of the British hardcover edition, originally published by Tom Stacey Ltd. This book, along with other Stacey titles, has been "dumped" in the remainder outlets, and is available at a lower price than the U.S. editions. (I will add the opinion that the Stacey edition is more attractive than the U.S. edition---the binding and dust-jacket are better, and the twelve pages of photographs are printed on coated paper. The Stacey edition also has a frontispiece portrait of Rohmer which is not included in the U.S. editions.)

In the course of John Nieminski's article in this issue, mention is made of "The Mysterious Mummy," Sax Rohmer's first published story. For many years the date and place of original publication of this story were lost. The detective work which finally tracked the story to its lair was done by TRR subscriber and contributor John E. Carroll of Baltimore. The issue of *Pearson's Weekly* in which the story appeared was a "Christmas extra," undated (but published on 24 November 1903) and usually not included in the bound volumes of the magazine found in libraries and private collections. This is probably the explanation for the story's elusiveness for nearly seventy years.

Quotation from "Kup's Column" in the *Chicago Sun-Times*, 5 September 1975: "'Fu Manchu' will be back with us shortly. Chicago moviemaker Zev Braun has acquired the film and TV rights to the classic from the Sax Rohmer estate." No other information available. *[See p. 24]*

The annual Anthony Boucher Memorial Mystery Conventions have become a tradition, and a very pleasant one. The 7th Bouchercon will be held on the weekend of October 1-3, 1976, in Los Angeles. See the announcement on page 12 of this issue for further details.

Readers whose interests go beyond Fu Manchu to general Oriental matters should be interested in a pleasant and informative monthly newspaper called *East Is East*, "A publication with stories and features about Far Eastern things and people." The four-page tabloid-size publication contains news items, cultural notes, folk-tales, recipes, and miscellany (including some very funny cartoons). The advertising is almost exclusively from the Seattle area, but there is enough other material in each issue for the paper to be of interest to a wide readership. Subscriptions are $3.25 per year, and the address is: P. O. Box 5247/Seattle, Washington 98105.

TRR #15 will lean more heavily toward illustrations than the present issue. "Bibliographical Rohmeriana" will be back, with more information on foreign translations of Rohmer's books. As for the rest: the mixture as before. ¤¤

From E. EVERETT, Seattle:

With reference to the article on Mr. Chang *[TRR #12]* and the subsequent comments of J. Randolph Cox *[TRR #13]*: when I was a boy I had two of the clothbound Mr. Chang books by A. E. Apple, *Mr. Chang of Scotland Yard* and *Mr. Chang's Crime Ray*. Both were published by Chelsea House, a subsidiary of Street & Smith. [Ed. Note: These two books, dated 1926 and 1928, respectively, are the only two Mr. Chang books listed in Allen J. Hubin's "Crime Fiction Bibliography." Anyone knowing of additional books in the series is invited to share the information.]

From FRANCIS M. NEVINS, JR., St. Louis:

In Laura Grimaldi's short story "Affirmation of Truth" (EQMM Nov 1974) mention is made of "the case of a certain Robert Butler who, on March 23, 1905, climbed to the gallows, having been found guilty of mass murder... . Butler publically *[sic]* admitted to being influenced by the wickedness of Fantomas and Fu Manchu in order to carry out his crimes." Fu Manchu? In 1905? Could Mr. Butler on top of his other accomplishments have been a time traveller?

From JAMES WADE, Seoul, Korea:

What with delays and distractions of one kind and another, I had forgotten by the time the latest TRR reached me that I had even sent you that dashed-off interview from the *Korea Times*, and so was surprised to see and recall it. The issue (#13) as a whole was up to snuff, even though Ron Goulart is never as clever as he thinks he is, or as he might be if he would slow down a little. Of course the classic Fu parody is "What Big Green Eyes You Have, Doctor," but I suppose that Perelman would not let this be reprinted without a fee. [Ed. Note: Even if S. J. Perelman's parody were available, there would not be much point in reprinting it here, since it is in print and easily accessible in two books. Both *The Ill-Tempered Clavichord* and *The Most of S. J. Perelman* exist in "quality" paperbound editions from Simon & Schuster. Readers who have not yet encountered "Why, Doctor, What Big Green Eyes You Have!" or Perelman's other Cloudland Revisited commentaries are urged to track them down.]

From MIKE VOSBURG, Battle Creek, Michigan:

Being in the comic-book business, I tremendously enjoyed Jack Gaughan's "Fu Chin Chow" in TRR #13. It was one of the simplest

and most readable things I've seen in a long time. It's unfortunate that there isn't more of a market for this type of stuff in commercial comics---everything I see now is totally oriented towards graphic violence. ‡‡‡ I stopped doing the Shang Chi strip for Marvel about a year ago. I was interested in doing more with Fu Manchu and they were more interested in karate, so we parted company. I'd still like to do a really well-conceived Fu strip, but I doubt if Marvel is very interested in handling the character as any more than a 'Yellow Peril.'

From FRANK D. McSHERRY, JR., McAlester, Oklahoma:

Just finished TRR #13 and it was hilarious. It's hard to pick a favorite---I keep putting each work in first place---but I think maybe the Miranda article and the Jack Gaughan strip are the best. ‡‡‡ Thanks for the kind words about the drawings for *The Non-Canonical Sherlock Holmes*. Several were done larger, and intended for full-page reproduction---Holmes at the chemistry table, Holmes watching the gun on the wall, the hansom in the foggy street seen through the window---but received a sharp reproduction in size. Jack the Ripper got a full page, though, which he was meant for.

From EVELYN HERZOG, New York:

I have long enjoyed *The Rohmer Review* and want to compliment you on issue #13. I chortled and whooped all the way through it. The fact that I first read it after a long a bibulous Sherlockian meeting in Washington, D.C., may have affected my judgement somewhat, but not, I think, to any great extent. Particular thanks to Jack Gaughan for "Fu Chin Chow." You will undoubtedly be wise to wait for a time before publishing any more humorous articles: the unexpectedness of the issue contributed a good deal to its charm.

From KATE KARLSON, New York:

I am a long-time subscriber to TRR, although my main interest has always been the study of Sherlock Holmes. However, the Devil Doctor has fascinated as many Sherlockians as Moriarty has. ‡‡‡ My point in writing now is to bring to your attention a sinister reference to Fu Manchu which I found in a most unexpected source. I work for an airline in New York which gets much of its tariff and fare information from Air France. AF sends us frequent bulletins on new fares, etc. Imagine my surprise, while perusing the section on Chinese-Government-ordered fares, to find a facsimile of Dr. Fu Manchu's airline ticket staring me in the face! And he is travelling even as I write this! How wickedly clever of the Si-Fan---taunting us plainly with their leader's actions when they know it is too late for counteroffensive moves. We can only hope that Sir Denis has a

trustworthy friend in the AF tariff department who was able to warn him of this heinous plot. We must steel ourselves for the Doctor's return. Should I get suspicious if I am called out to Kennedy that day? [Ed. Note: The source of Ms. Karlson's understandable concern is unfortunately too small to reproduce legibly here. It is indeed a facsimile of an Air France ticket, from an official publication. The ticket is made out to a certain MAN CHU/F. MR., and records his itinerary: from New York's Kennedy Airport to Paris on 23 January 1976, from Paris on to Peking on 27 January; returning from Peking to Paris on 18 March, and from Paris back to New York on (appropriately enough) 1 April 1976. Too late now to thwart whatever devious plans were under way.]

From STEPHEN SHUTT, Havre de Grace, Maryland:

"The Hand of Dr. Insidious" was good in some spots, though some of the predilections Mr. Goulart is spoofing are foreign to Rohmer's writings, e.g., the hero's propensity for fainting, which occurred often in the works of Lovecraft, but not among Rohmer's stiff-upper-lippers. "Fu Chin Chow" also vacillated as far as quality is concerned, though it had its moments---particularly Nayland Smith sailing through the air exclaiming "We are but children compared to that yellow fiend!" I also liked the idea, in "Hand," of Charisma, the beautiful slave-girl; it is a pity that she never made an appearance on-stage. ### I enclose a post card for acknowledgement of my subscription renewal. You may recognize the house it depicts---a quaint little place about which the most delightful legends have been told. [The card pictured the House of Seven Gables in Salem.--Ed.] When I visited it, my guide---a man of singular height, with incredibly long, slightly oblique eyes of a remarkable shade of green---related to me in a voice alternately sibilant and gutteral the tale of a recent scandal connected with the house. It seems that a man had been found dead inside a narrow, secret staircase leading off one of the drawing rooms. The expression on his face caused the women who discovered the body to faint, though the only mark visible upon him was a sort of red weal on the back of one hand. It looked strangely like the imprint of rouged lips. It seems that the fellow had concealed himself in the hidden passage in an attempt to escape some fearful danger. Found upon the body was a scrap of paper on which a few scrawled notes had been made, apparently during the death-throes: the paper was clutched tightly in one hand, while a pencil lay listless in the other. The note bore this cryptic message: "TRR renewal---rubber check---thought Brin(illegible) would not notice---The Zayat Kiss!" Needless to say, attempts to connect the case with a chapter of a book of popular fiction, and with one of the town's citizens around whose house curious wails have been heard on certain nights, failed. My mysterious guide ended his tale with some obscure remark about the Doctor (which doctor, he didn't say) paying his debts---sometimes with interest. One never knows what stories these locals will dream up for their own amusement... .

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